

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Disciplinary departures and discipline formation: The institutional rationale

Journal Item

How to cite:

Gupta, Suman (2017). Disciplinary departures and discipline formation: The institutional rationale. TEXT Journal of Writing and Writing Courses, 21(2)

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2017 The Author



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct17/gupta.htm>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

TEXT

Vol 21 No 2 October 2017

<http://www.textjournal.com.au>

General Editor: Nigel Krauth. Editors: Kevin Brophy, Enza Gandolfo & Julianne van Loon
text@textjournal.com.au

<http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct17/gupta.htm>

The Open University, UK

Suman Gupta

Disciplinary departures and discipline formation: The institutional rationale

Abstract

This paper analyses the institutional relationship between Creative Writing and Literary Studies, with their erstwhile close association and current drift towards disciplinary separation in view. It is in three parts. The first outlines some histories of the academic discipline of Creative Writing in the university. The second examines what's involved for Creative Writing in discipline formation in the university, and touches on the role played by professional associations (with a particular emphasis on the case of NAWE in Britain). The third part comments on recent moves towards developing Creative Writing Studies.

Keywords: creative writing, literary studies, university

Creative Writing and Literary Studies

A great deal of the discussion of Creative Writing in relation to Literary Studies and vice versa has consisted in complaints. Those who consider themselves Literary Scholars/Theorists have complained frequently about Creative Writing, and similarly Creative Writers have often inveighed against Literary Studies (and especially Theory). In some instances, both have complained about the indifference or ignorance of the other. Different kinds of intellectual authority have been challenged in the process, and much abstruse and common-sense verbiage has gone into all this. Let's put the details of these mutual disapprovals aside. Enthusiastic pragmatism about and moralistic commitment to a fuzzy idea of 'creativity' have occasionally united all sides, without necessarily dispelling mutual doubts – in a spirit of getting things done in a comradely manner or of looking at the righteous and bright side of life. Let's put that aside too.

This discussion has largely concerned the extent to which Creative Writing and Literary Studies should be regarded as a joint enterprise, a partnership of complementary enterprises, or simply different enterprises which are often – unnecessarily – chained to each other. The last seems to be increasingly favoured: the comparatively youthful area of Creative Writing, it is argued, should be autonomous alongside and preferably independent of the older area of Literary Studies. At times, the argument has preferred to tag Creative Writing to other areas at the expense of Literary Studies, such as to Media and Communications, or Art and Performance Practice. However, amidst that larger drift there are occasional counter currents of wistfully contemplating or timidly proposing collaboration and perhaps even integration.

All these arguments are about institutional prerogatives, mainly in educational institutions, and particularly at the tertiary level (let's dub this level, without prejudice, 'the university'). However high-flown the terms of the discussion might have been, the critical question is: what sort of space should be occupied by each or both in the university? Budgets, policies, livelihoods, careers, work and status are at stake here. But the discussion has only conditionally or secondarily been conducted in those materialistic terms, and usually cursorily then. It has been engaged primarily so as to justify Creative Writing apropos of Literary Studies in conceptual terms: the distinct kinds of knowledge and social good enabled, the concepts and methods involved, the curricula and practices developed, pedagogic and research purposes. But those materialist and institutional concerns simmer constantly beneath the surface of the discussion, and sometimes surface in a conditional or secondary fashion.

This larger direction of the discussion is entirely understandable, as are its tacit institutional manoeuvres and voluble intellectual and ethical claims. In the university, Literary Studies as we understand it now (especially the discipline that passes as English now) went through very similar negotiations in relation to Philology, Rhetoric and the Classics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; as did modern Linguistics (post-Saussure) in relation to Philology first and then Literary Studies well into the latter half of the twentieth.

This paper does not make arguments about what the relationship of Creative Writing and Literature in the university ought to be; it seeks to clarify the rationale of how that relationship has developed so far. So, a few notes follow on discussions of that relationship *insofar* as institutional reasonings are apparent therein – that is, where the terms of debate are not confined to principled claims and counterclaims and abstract ideological subscriptions. Three more or less consecutive phases of the discussion are briefly charted here: on historicizing Creative Writing in the university; on making Creative Writing fit university gauges and markers; on constructing Creative Writing Studies. No firm conclusion follows; what bearing the following observations have on the work of writers and critics in the university is left for them to determine.

Historicizing Creative Writing

Historicizing Creative Writing in the university has generally followed the patterns of historicizing Literary Studies/English as an academic discipline. That is, it has been informed by the intellectual phases charted for the latter in numerous monographs and papers. Moreover, this project has largely emulated the strategies through which Literary Studies gradually established its identity by departing from (or overcoming) institutional forebears, in

considering the establishment of Creative Writing's identity through a series of departures from the institutional eminence of Literary Studies. And yet, the very firmness with which Creative Writing is understood as departing from Literary Studies also suggests a sticky relationship – perhaps a potential for integration – with Literary Studies.

Thus, DG Myers's *The Elephants Teach* (1996/2006) followed the patterns of Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature* (1987). It presented an account of the institutionalization of Creative Writing in USA academia (where it originated) woven upon Graff's account of the same for English/American literature there (tracing a series of 'conflicts' or debates through which it emerged). In brief, Myers charted how Creative Writing was first differentiated from both Philology and textual scholarship to be conceived as a discipline alongside, but distinct from, Literary Studies. Then, he tracked a phase of Creative Writing's collaboration with literary criticism (especially New Criticism) as a dissent against the rigorous professionalization of Literary Studies. Finally, he outlined how Creative Writing incorporated its own rigorous professionalization after 1970 by claiming independence from Literary Studies (with the support of institutional bureaucracies fixated on student recruitment). Creative Writers became employed teachers in the university, wearing mantles similar to those of other academic teachers. Myers's tone suggested regret at the passing of the integrationist interim:

Creative Writing was originally an enterprise for bringing the understanding of literature and the use of it into one system. The plan for doing was not always adequate to the task... The idea of creative writing was to join the study of literary texts to the act of creating them, and the culture would have a place for it as long as these things were put asunder.

In 1976 ... the American Philosophical Society reclassified 'creative arts' as being separate from the criticism of them. On the one hand, this registered the fact that creative writing had cut the apron strings, establishing itself as a fully autonomous branch of the curriculum. But on the other hand it suggested that the original intention behind creative writing had been lost sight of. (Myers 2006: 168)

By way of filling gaps, updating, and more importantly complementing Myers's account, Mark McGurl's *The Program Era* (2009) focused on the post Second World War period in the USA. This argued that in the post-War period significant fiction (or poetry) writers and Creative Writing teachers have so often been the same person that US literature has itself been reshaped in a symbiotic relationship with Creative Writing programmes in the university. Insofar as historicizing the latter *within* the university goes, it departs very little from the pattern set by Myers, and before that by Graff and others for Literary Studies/English (such as, DJ Palmer, Chris Baldick, Brian Doyle, Terry Eagleton, Richard Ohmann, Robert Crawford, Franklin E Court, Jo McMurtry, John Dixon, Robert Scholes, Thomas P Miller). But there's a different ideological perspective on display here: where Myers regretted the passing of an integrative enterprise, McGurl approached his task as a champion of the autonomy and emerging eminence of Creative Writing. He still tracked Creative Writing as departing from Literary Studies, but spoke with a sense of Creative Writing being triumphant and indeed moulding Literary Studies from both within and, so to speak, the outside. He spoke disapprovingly of indifferent and ignorant Literary Scholars. The impetus for his book was accordingly stated thus:

Writing programs: pro or con? There is nothing wrong with this debate, but surely it's time for the museless pedants to have their say. What is needed now, that is, are studies

that take the rise and spread of the creative writing program not as an occasion for praise or lamentation but as an established fact in need of historical interpretation: how, why, and to what end has the writing program reorganized U.S. literary production in the postwar period? And, even more important for my purposes here, how might this fact be brought to bear on a reading of postwar literature itself? (McGurl 2009: 27)

The book works then as an exemplary demonstration of what ‘museless pedants’ should attend to from one who has his muse at hand: the study of Creative Writing as a given and salutary institutional space. Unsurprisingly, a sharply critical review by Elif Batuman (not in the least museless herself) followed in *The London Review of Books* (Batuman 2010), and an acrimonious but productive debate followed, taken up energetically by McGurl (2011) and Myers (2011) amongst others. McGurl’s book has chimed with Creative Writers and the muselessly up-to-date alike, and its influence (its catchphrase title) has been reiterated in Loren Glass’s edited volume *After the Program Era* (Glass 2017). With US academia in view, somewhat earlier Tim Mayers’ *(Re)Writing Craft* (2005) made a useful intervention in decentring the debate from Creative Writing and Literary Studies to ‘examining past, present, and future relationships between composition and creative writing’ (Mayers 2005: 22). Mayers’ argument about those relationships serve primarily to outline contemporary renegotiations of the remit of English Studies, conventionally thought of as centred on literary studies; though historicist sections bolster this argument, the historical content is not brought together coherently. The place of composition in institutional histories of English Studies or ‘college English’ – usually traced from rhetoric – is extensively covered ground, particularly for the USA (in books by Arthur Applebee, Richard Ohmann, James Berlin, Albert Kitzhaber, Nan Johnson, Robert Scholes, W Ross Winterowd, Thomas P Miller, and edited by Winifred Bryan Horner and by Gregory Clark and Michael Halloran). The history of Creative Writing’s departures from that, as from the more weightily institutionalised Literary Studies, remain to be carefully considered.

Micheline Wandor’s *The Author is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else* (2008) offers a historicist account of Creative Writing in the UK. It also traces Creative Writing’s departures from Literary Studies/English with a commitment to the achieved success and independence of the ‘subject’, but its episodic structure obscures the cohesive historiographical principles at work in the narrative. It is designed more as a guidebook for Creative Writers (especially students), offering tough lessons to be learned by contemplating the history of institutionalised Creative Writing in the UK. This is consistent with the spirit in which it was approached:

Creative Writing needs more than an alternative ‘how-to’ book. There are plenty of those. It needs an account of its history, and an analysis and explanation of why it has come to take its current form. Its very success and recognition as a university ‘subject’ means that it has reached a point where it can benefit from a trenchant critique of its principles and practices. I am passionately committed to the potential of CW, the latest art form to enter the academy as a ‘subject’. I am completely convinced that ‘creative’ (ie imaginative) writing can be taught, and can be productive and exciting for teachers and students. (Wandor 2008: 4)

This is consequently a historicist ‘how-to’ book by a committed and passionate teacher of Creative Writing as an independent ‘subject’ in the academy, addressed to fellow Creative Writers.

Paul Dawson's *Creative Writing and the New Humanities* (2005) is the most sustained attempt at historicizing Creative Writing (with a focus on the Australian university) while avowing a desire for the integration thereof with Literary Studies – more or less in the way Myers had found it in the past. With a fairly hefty artillery of theoretical vocabulary (though McGurl was not far behind a bit later), this offered a careful working through of concepts and practices cutting across both, as well as distinctively in each. Integrative moves, or at the least moves wherein Creative Writing and Literary Studies speak to each other, in the present were noted along the way: notably in Chapter 5, in terms of what he calls the 'integration model', the 'avant-garde model' and the 'political model'. Also, along the way several Creative Writing concepts and practices were reformulated so as to accentuate their literary critical thrust; for instance, in articulating a 'poetics of Creative Writing':

the poetics of Creative Writing is not a bridge between the criticism or interpretation of individual texts and a science of literary structure, but both criticism, a formalist examination of the methods by which a literary work is made, and a "making", a form of reading which participates in the drafting process. (Dawson 2005: 120)

In developing his argument Dawson envisages a future in which Creative Writers in the university would come to be regarded as intellectuals in much the way their Literary Studies colleagues are, developing and representing literary knowledge from a distinctive perspective, like other distinctive perspectives, within the same accredited institutional space (department, discipline):

if Creative Writing is a site for the professional training of writers, but is not a necessary system of accreditation, its main function is to contribute to the domain of knowledge of cultural intellectuals within the academy by the provision of a literary education. The performance of this necessary function in fact contributes to the goal of reproducing literature as a profession through the employment and training of writers, precisely because the domain of knowledge that incorporates Creative Writing takes literature as its object of study. This knowledge sustains the profession of literature by affording it cultural prestige – thus increasing its capital or potential to generate more capital, not to mention the direct sales generated by reading lists. (Dawson 2005: 193)

This is however a relatively marginal view of the matter, and hasn't had the purchase that McGurl's or Wandor's disciplinary commitments have had.

A curious feature of the histories of Creative Writing sketchily outlined above is that they are insular: they tend to focus myopically on rationales and discourses which operate *within* the university, which give the university its institutional insider-voice. Developments thus appear to be driven essentially by commitments and ideologies articulated in academic discourse (to do with pedagogy and scholarship), and by institutional responses to social forces. Social forces are predominantly mediated by academic discourse and the structure of the university before touching 'subject' or disciplinary knowledge production; the latter appear semi-insulated from social forces while being, of course, subject to them – just as the university is. In this respect also, the above histories emulate histories of the academic discipline of Literary Studies/English. However, for the latter this makes a modicum of sense: Literary Studies has emerged to a significant extent within the university, amidst the traditional Humanities, out of Philology, Rhetoric and the *Literae Humaniores*. For Creative Writing the insularity is more questionable: Creative Writers and Writing have had (and continue to have) a living presence as such, as organised structure, outside the university. Both the

professionalization and institutionalization of Creative Writing occurred outside the university well before programmes and disciplinary affiliations sprung up. That happened more significantly amidst writers' associations and unions (such as the UK Society of Authors, established 1884, or the US Authors Guild, 1912), and through the publication of professional writers' newsletters (most influentially *The Writer* in the USA, from 1887). Naturally the publishing industry and publishing agents were central to the profession and gradually the institutional apparatus of Creative Writing: from little magazines to literary and lifestyle magazines to books -- even journalistic broadsheets were considerably more accommodative of Creative Writing through much of the twentieth century than the university (though a ready distinction between journalistic and creative writing seems meaningful now). Political organizations also played their part, especially progressive organizations between the wars. The role of media industries (radio and television and onwards), independent of the university, can hardly be underestimated by any Creative Writer. Only fleeting glimpses of these are available in the histories mentioned above. Christopher Hilliard's *To Exercise Our Talents* (2006) is a rare historicist attempt to systematically chart this area for Britain at monograph length, presenting a view of Creative Writing from the bottom, from the working and lower-middle classes, from outside the university.

Most histories of Creative Writing in the university, and the enthusiasm they generate, show that Creative Writers feel as comfortable in the university as Literary Scholars. These histories are also at home in the ostensible academic culture of Literary Studies. They are wary of mentioning money and finance though far from indifferent to those (especially when it comes to university budgets and student recruitment). They are also somewhat ambiguous about those Creative Writers in history who have written mainly for a livelihood rather than with 'creative' inspiration and righteous principles. Such writers and their collective efforts have a peripheral, blurred place in institutional histories of Creative Writing.

Fitting the Institution

For Creative Writing and Writer-teachers, significant success in recruiting students to programmes and ensuring a satisfying student experience has guaranteed the support of both university managers and academic colleagues. Support has appeared importantly in the form of investment in secure employment and infrastructure. This support comes at a cost to Creative Writers: they have had to become teachers with the same contractual obligations as other university teachers, usually with the hefty teaching loads that follow success in student recruitment. Maintaining levels of student recruitment and satisfaction that the university has come to expect entails a very considerable effort on the part of Creative Writer-teachers. There is constant pressure to develop teaching methods, renew pedagogic practice, expand the range of programmes and then sustain them. At an obvious level, Creative Writer-teachers have to then do a great deal of un-Creative ('museless', as Mark McGurl might have put it) thinking, administration and writing -- in addition to the un-Creative aspects of making their creative writings public. Arguably, few university disciplines have acquired as many guidebooks, textbooks, good practice sharing books, 'how-to' publications, 'feel-good-about-Creative Writing' texts in as short a period (particularly after 1990). By and large, Creative Writer-teachers appear to have engaged with all this enthusiastically, encouraged by the interest of students and the prospects of security and status in the university.

But institutionalization and professionalization in the university do not stop at success in setting up and delivering pedagogic programmes. Creative Writing and Writer-teachers in the university are required by the university – following sector-specific education policy directives – to meet measures which apply across the sector, that is, apply to all academic employees in all disciplines. These bring in performance measures and production targets apart from student recruitment and satisfaction. For teaching, that may include various higher education quality assurance measures, gauges of employability, benchmarks and programme-level criteria, public interest justifications, and the like. Alongside that, there are broader measures relevant to knowledge production (bearing upon performance in research and scholarship): such as, measurements of the relevance and reliability of the academic knowledge cultivated, targets for benefitting other sectors (the in-vogue term is ‘impact’). These measurements and targets generally provide the rationale on which the university receives funding and then disburses funding within its structures. So, having guaranteed a secure and well-deserved space within the university, Creative Writer-teachers often find that a great deal of museless work beyond pedagogy is demanded, much of which sits uneasily with the norms commonly associated with Creative Writing.

Insofar as the relationship between Creative Writing and Literary Studies (where regarded as distinct) goes, these institutional considerations pull in contrary directions. On the one hand, clear institutional bifurcation seems encouraged. University managers are apt to feel that the success of Creative Writing in the student market should be capitalised by making its brand as sharp and focused as possible – by making ‘Creative Writing’ a brand logo. Complementing this, Creative Writer-teachers may feel that the desserts of their hard work should accrue directly to themselves, and should not be distributed to, for instance, Literary Scholars by some institutional logic. So, in budgetary and other accounting terms it might be beneficial for Creative Writing to be an accredited department in itself rather than to remain part of a larger department which includes Literary Studies. On the other hand, there might be advantages to retaining common institutional spaces. That might ensure security insofar as the complex of existing measures and targets go (especially beyond pedagogy). That might also work as a check against the imperative push of the market logic of branding which university managers seek, and which does sit uneasily with the norms of Creative Writing. Also, Literary Scholars in the department turn out to be eager to work alongside Creative Writer-teachers, especially when they realise that there are institutional advantages to be gained from Creative Writing’s pedagogic success which would accrue to them also.

Which way things might go – towards bifurcation or common ground – is at present difficult to tell, and, in any case, there is probably no uniform answer. The general drift, it seems, is towards bifurcation; but that’s not so much because this has been consensually planned or envisaged, but due to the design of institutional rationales. To manoeuvre through the institutional setting of the university, once Creative Writer-teachers found themselves within it, and moreover successfully within it and yet not quite in synch with Literary Studies, they had to do what any distinctive set of workers in any institutional setting has to do: set up professional guidance and lobby groups to protect their interests. So, the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) was set up in the USA, as its website says, in 1967 ‘by fifteen writers representing thirteen creative writing programs. The new association sought to support the growing presence of literary writers in higher education’ (AWP 2017; see also Fenza 2002). The National Association of Writers in Education (see NAWENd) was formed in the UK in 1987, to ‘promote the educational ideals of writers who work at all levels in education and to make the benefits of their work available to a wider cross section of students’ (according to its 2008 Manifesto, quoted in Munden 2014: 26). The Australasian

Association of Writing Programmes (AAWP) was established in 1996 to similar ends, and others have come together in various contexts since (e.g. the European Association of Creative Writing Programs [EACWP], Canadian Creative Writers and Writing Programs [CCWWP], and numerous at regional or local levels). These have, since, absorbed some of the energies of older, and more inclusive, professional societies and associations of writers, such as those mentioned in the previous section: these have served to not merely *represent* Creative Writing in the university but also *occupy* Creative Writing for the university.

Once lobby groups come into existence and grow, there is an almost inevitable institutional rationale for them to follow. *First*, they are called upon to initiate a process of maintaining, asserting and promoting the interests of their membership. Focusing in this instance on NAWE in Britain, this process can be traced in its publications. The first step in such an association's programme is towards maintaining and expanding its membership. That means organising forums like conferences and seminars, and, in terms of the published record, initiating a magazine/newsletter for its membership to deliberate with each other as a community with shared interests. So, in 1988 NAWE established *Writing in Education*. The second step is not merely to have its membership deliberating with each other, but doing so in an outward-facing manner – that is, as a specific academic community which adheres to the norms of academic communities in general, and puts a record out there accordingly. In that vein the scholarly *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* started appearing from 2004. This wasn't an official NAWE publication but fitted into its developing programme: it appeared shortly after NAWE became an incorporated company in 2000, was edited by influential NAWE members Graeme Harper and Richard Kerridge, and Harper was to become the inaugural chair of NAWE's Higher Education Committee in 2008. Harper's editorial in the first issue stated its outward-looking ambition:

Because Creative Writing today is quite simply one of the most vibrant parts of formal and informal university and college life this in itself would be a very good reason to launch *New Writing: the International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*. But Creative Writing on campus is never limited to activities on campus: it reaches back to the creative writing of earlier education, and forward (and sideways!) to the world of work, the commerce and cultures of creative writing. Likewise, Creative Writing on campus deals in specific kinds of critical understanding, those accompanying creative practice, and it defines this critical understanding “in process”, and “in response”. One of the most enduring and yet most forward looking of subjects, Creative Writing today sits at the core of making a campus creative and, in that, at the heart of academe's future. (Harper 2004: 1)

This publication rigorously follows a standard format of academic journals and adheres to a standardised academic register (with the backing of scholarly publisher Taylor & Francis). A further step is taken when NAWE then established another journal, *Writing in Practice: The Journal of Creative Writing Research*, in 2015, by way of consolidating Creative Writing not merely as following academic norms but by reflecting upon itself as an *academic* discipline – but more on this move below.

Second, such lobby groups (much like trade unions), when sufficiently influential, establish working relations with the managements that regulate employment – in this case, with higher education policy makers and university bureaucracies. The process described above re

NAWE publications, alongside its other activities, is key to not merely representing Creative Writer-teachers but also to consolidating the brand of 'Creative Writing' for the education market, for making 'Creative Writing' an independently estimable brand. As such, its endeavours are in line with those of university management and government or corporate education policy-making bodies. So, NAWE has gradually come to work as a consulting and enabling body for policy making and university management. It provides a portal for listing bona fide Creative Writing programs in the British university, and more importantly it sets standards for the purposes of regulating Creative Writing in the university in a way that could inform higher education policy and governance. Thus, NAWE first produced the 'benchmark' statement for the Creative Writing Subject and for Creative Writing Research in 2008 (NAWE Higher Education Committee 2008), and then collaborated with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to produce the Subject Benchmark Statement of February 2016 (QAA 2016). The QAA provides such benchmarks and accreditations for all subjects in UK higher education. These benchmark statements mark a policy move which gestures towards the separation of Literary Studies and Creative Writing as distinct 'subjects' for institutional accounting and accreditation purposes.

Creative Writing Studies

Amongst moves made by Creative Writing and Writer-teachers in the university to fit broader institutional mores therein, an interesting schism seems to have opened up within the 'subject'. This has to do with research. On the one hand, the institutional formation of the modern university has developed with a commitment to provide not only education but also to cultivate knowledge in the public interest. This commitment is now understood as undertaking research, and somewhat narrowly measured in terms of 'outputs' and, of late, by nebulous notions of 'impact' (the latter is usually considered posterior to 'outputs', at least I can't see how it could be otherwise). These are, in keeping with institutional measuring and target-setting practices, gauges that are applied across the sector, for all disciplines in the university. It therefore seems expedient for Creative Writing in the university to meet these gauging regimes in their own terms insofar as possible – though that sits uneasily with the norms and practices that Creative Writing is associated with, even in terms of its brand recognition. Nevertheless, career pathways and status are so powerfully grounded in such institutional measures that Creative Writer-teachers as professionals find their prospects curtailed unless they can claim to measure up accordingly. So, considerable effort has been expended on defining the research that is peculiar to Creative Writing and is not simply Literary Studies research, usually by articulating some notion of research-in-practice or practice-based research. On the other hand, since Creative Writing secured its institutional guarantee by success in the student market, it has been pushed by university bureaucracies to proliferate its programmes and thus expand its market capture. Histories of Creative Writing in the university have often noted that proliferation of programmes had, after the 1970s, initially taken place downwards, from MFA or MA programmes to BA programmes; more recently (post-2000, judging by publications on the subject), they have moved upwards, to the PhD. Creative Writing PhDs were conceived as both evidencing practice of writing creatively and reflection on that practice.

It is now proposed in certain circles that Creative Writing research may be such as is not practice-based, where the output is conventionally academic. And there could be PhD theses which do not need to demonstrate Creative Writing practice. But these should not be

considered Literary Studies research outputs; these would be Creative Writing research outputs.

At any rate, from the institutional logic of those two directions there has appeared of late 'Creative Writing Studies': institutionally within Creative Writing, and yet not itself involving the practice of Creative Writing. Put otherwise, Creative Writing is considered as grounded in *doing* Creative Writing, while Creative Writing Studies *investigates the doing* of Creative Writing – it is research which takes Creative Writing as its academic theme rather than its hands-on endeavour.

Drawing upon the *New Writing* journal mentioned above, its editor Graeme Harper started a book series, *New Writing Viewpoints*, published by Multilingual Matters (its first volume appeared in 2005). Volumes of these moved towards formulating a space for 'Creative Writing Studies' as outlined above, notably in Harper and Jeri Kroll's edited *Creative Writing Studies: Practice, Research and Pedagogy* (2008), and with more forthright ambition in Dianne Donnelly's edited *Establishing Creative Writing Studies as an Academic Discipline* (2012). Donnelly's introduction draws away from workshop-centred and practice-based pursuits of Creative Writing in the university, to offer a definition of Creative Writing Studies:

Creative Writing Studies... not only supports but welcomes intellectual analyses that may reveal new theories. Such theories have important teaching implications and insights into ways creative writers read, write and respond. In fact, as a necessary step in embracing its own identity and scholarship, *creative writing studies* considers its 'markers of professional difference'..., those identifying features which distinguish its field from composition studies and literary studies. The discipline also explores creative writing research as knowledge, its practitioners appreciating that writing processes and research reveal new insights that add operational significance to the field. Finally, *creative writing studies* promotes the hiring of those writer-teachers who propel the field forward by means of scholarly production and pedagogical presentations. (Donnelly 2012: 2)

A bit later, Donnelly rounds this up with: 'I situate *creative writing studies* shoulder-to-shoulder with literary studies and composition studies as a pedagogically and programmatically sound entity fully empowered in its own identity and scholarship' (4). The call for an explicit *institutional* space is pretty emphatic here, as is the distinction from Creative Writing as a practice-based 'subject'. There's an inclusive nod there towards Creative Writing research (conceived earlier as still centring practice, as in PhD programmes), and a magnanimous offer to promote suitable writer-teachers -- but otherwise its interest in practice is in the spirit of watching Creative Writers or having Creative Writers as 'human subjects' or 'informants' for research (as research ethics guidelines from universities and professional bodies now habitually put it).

This move has quickly worked towards empowering itself by professional markers. NAWÉ's journal *Writing in Practice: The Journal of Creative Writing Research*, beginning from 2015 (mentioned above), seems to occupy a middle ground between Creative Writing research and studies; its content, at any rate, is more in the spirit of Donnelly's understanding of Creative Writing Studies. Its tone was set in an article by JT Welsch contemplating NAWÉ's benchmark statement and the Arts and Humanities Research Council's funding guidelines, a down-to-earth institutional pondering on establishing research credentials in conventional

academic terms for Creative Writing (Welsch 2016). More straightforwardly along the lines Donnelly and Harper have laid out, an online *Journal of Creative Writing Studies* started appearing from 2016, published by the Rochester Institute of Technology. For its first issue Anne Leahy (2016) wrote an unusually sceptical article on the enterprise of Creative Writing Studies. With the passage by Donnelly quoted above in mind, Leahy observes:

creative writing studies — as a term and as a concept — argues for a severing of the critical from the creative in our discipline. While I understand the urge to map academic territory for oneself and, with it, gain visibility and, presumably, respect, the metaphor that comes to my mind is the surgical removal of a limb. That's a visceral response that I know many of my collaborators in this area don't share.

Donnelly writes, "The academic goal of *creative writing studies* is to stand alongside composition studies and literary studies and any other university field of study as a separate-but-equal discipline." *Separate*, she writes. ...Donnelly doesn't mention creative writing in the proposed configuration. Instead, creative writing, because of its absence in the list of side-by-side equal disciplines, seems supplanted so that creative writing studies can take its place in the mix. (Leahy 2016: 5)

Those are a Creative Writer-teacher's musings. Literary Scholars, who are no strangers to breakaways from their institutional spaces, might also feel puzzled. If one puts aside emotive assertions of conviction in Creative Writing, and claims to promote employment for Creative Writer-teachers, and frequent use of the 'Creative Writing' brand-name, there is little to distinguish the substantial enterprise of Creative Writing Studies from what has always been an intensively pursued branch of scholarship in Literary Studies. Having Creative Writers as 'human research subjects' and 'informants', looking closely at processes of Creative Writing as well as products, gathering data relevant to understanding these, contemplating the experience of writing ... all these are the hoary heart of Literary Studies for as long as it has been an academic discipline in the university. Creative Writing Studies seems to consist in not mentioning this kind of work as Literary Studies and instead making it the business of a coterie – a coterie which has agreed not to acknowledge the prolific history of such scholarship as Literary Studies. Little more is proposed.

The future envisaged for Creative Writing Studies can perhaps be picked out of Graeme Harper's *The Future of Creative Writing* (2014). In the main, this speculates on a future where the currently dominant modes of production, in print and within a concordant intellectual property regime, will be replaced by the more fluid and interconnected resources and regimes of digital writing and reading. He envisages thereby the emergence of 'a market ... for the *experience* of creative writing as well as its final artifacts' (Harper 2014: 11); an environment where processes will become both more tractable for the benefit of research and more capitalizable in market terms by researchers. He fails to mention that these processes are already being numerously examined, analysed and theorised by various researchers, especially under the umbrella of Literary Studies (by Jay David Bolter, George Landow, Silvio Gaggi, Espen Aarseth, Katherine Hayles, Jerome McGann, Marie-Laure Ryan, Lori Emerson, Scott Rettberg and Patricia Tomaszek, to name a few).

Works cited

- AWP 2017 'Our History and the Growth of Creative Writing Programs', AWP: Association of Writers & Writing Programs: https://www.awpwriter.org/about/our_history_overview (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text
- Batuman, E 2010 'Get a Real Degree', *London Review of Books* 32, 18 (23 September): <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n18/elif-batuman/get-a-real-degree> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text
- Dawson, P 2005 *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, Routledge, London return to text
- Donnelly, D 2012 *Establishing Creative Writing Studies as an Academic Discipline*, Multilingual Matters, Bristol return to text
- Fenza, D 2002 'A Brief History of AWP', *Writers Chronicle* (15 March): <http://awpwriter.org/aboutawp/index.htm/> (accessed June 2012, now unavailable) return to text
- Glass, L (ed) 2017 *After the Program Era: The Past, Present and Future of Creative Writing in the University*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City return to text
- Graff, G 1987 *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago return to text
- Harper, G 2004 'Editorial: Who's Creating Your Campus?' *New Writing* 1, 1: 1-2 return to text
- Harper, G 2014 *The Future of Creative Writing*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester return to text
- Harper, G & J Kroll (eds) 2008 *Creative Writing Studies: Practice, Research and Pedagogy*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon return to text
- Hilliard, C 2006 *To Exercise Our Talents: The Democratization of Writing in Britain*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA return to text
- Leahy, A 2016 'Against Creative Writing Studies (and for Ish-ness)', *Journal of Creative Writing Studies* 1, 1: 1-13: <http://scholarworks.rit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1031&context=jcws> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text
- McGurl, M 2009 *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA return to text
- McGurl, M 2011 'The MFA Octopus: Four Questions about Creative Writing', *Los Angeles Review of Books* (11 May): <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-mfa-octopus-four-questions-about-creative-writing/> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text
- Mayers, T 2005 *(Re)Writing Craft: Composition, Creative Writing, and the Future of English Studies*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh return to text
- Munden, PWA 2014 'Positioning Poetry: A Maverick Framework for the Curious and Bold', PhD thesis, Middlesex University, Middlesex University Research Repository: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/13182/> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text
- Myers, DG 2006 [1996] *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago return to text

Myers, DG 2011 'The paradoxical politics of creative writing', *A Commonplace Blog* (13 May): <http://dgmyers.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/paradoxical-politics-of-creative.html> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text

NAWE (National Association of Writers in Education) nd: <https://www.nawe.co.uk/home.html> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text

NAWE Higher Education Committee 2008 *A Subject Benchmark for Creative Writing* (September): <https://www.nawe.co.uk/Private/17547/Live/CW%20Benchmarks.pdf> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text

QAA 2016 *Subject Benchmark Statement: Creative Writing*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (February): <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Creative-Writing-16.pdf> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text

Wandor, M 2008 *The Author is Not Dead, Merely Somewhere Else: Creative Writing Reconceived*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke return to text

Welsch, JT 2016 'Critical Approaches to Creative Writing: A Case Study', *Writing in Practice: The Journal of Creative Writing Research* 1: <https://www.nawe.co.uk/DB/current-wip-edition-2/articles/critical-approaches-to-creative-writing-a-case-study.html> (accessed 23 August 2017) return to text

Suman Gupta is Professor of Literature and Cultural History at The Open University, UK. Recent books include: Philology and Global English Studies (Palgrave 2015), Consumable Texts in Contemporary India (Palgrave 2015), and the co-authored Reconsidering English Studies in India with Allen, Chattarji and Chaudhuri (Routledge 2015) and Usurping Suicide: The Political Resonances of Individual Death with Katsarska, Spyros and Hajimichael (Zed 2017).
